
4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an analysis of the current state of Morgan Hill's Parks and Recreation System, along with recommendations to meet existing and future recreation needs. The summary of findings and recommendations is divided into the following categories:

- Parkland acquisition and facility development
- Capital improvements funding
- Facility design
- Recreation Programming
- Operations and Maintenance
- Homeowners Association Parks

The summary of findings and recommendations is based on evaluation of several factors as noted below:

- Existing population and future population projections
- The inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities
- Interviews with City staff and representatives of other recreation providers
- Input from the Parks and Recreation Commission, Senior Advisory Committee, and Youth Advisory Committee
- Interviews with representatives of sports leagues and organizations
- Comments at community meetings
- Results of the telephone survey

Parkland Acquisition and Facility Development

Finding:

City residents highly value parks and recreation facilities as an integral part of their community. Parks contribute to Morgan Hill's "small town" character and sense of community. An ambitious but achievable acquisition goal is needed to encourage and evaluate land acquisition for parks and recreation facilities. A quantifiable system is needed to evaluate whether the City has achieved its parkland acquisition goals.

Recommendation:

The City shall adopt a goal of 5 acres of parkland per thousand population. Parkland towards this goal will be calculated as noted below. Definitions for each of the facility types will be included in the Recreational Facility Classifications.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 4.1
Parkland Calculations Toward 5 Acre Per Thousand Population Standard

City-Owned Parks:	100% of total acreage
Special Use Facilities: (Community center, senior center, youth center, aquatics center, MACSA Center etc.)	100% of total acreage
Trails: (Off-street bicycle/pedestrian trails, such as along drainage corridors)	100% of trail acreage (includes trail and adjacent landscape improvements)
Recreational Open Space:	10% of total acreage, unless active recreational improvements are included. Active recreational improvements are calculated at 100% of the improvement area. County-owned facilities are counted only if there is a joint-use agreement for City use.
HOA Parks:	50% of recreational acreage
Schools:	100% of recreational facility acreage, only if there is a joint-use agreement for City use.

Finding:

There is a current and anticipated future shortage of parkland based on the 5 acre per thousand population goal. However, based on proposed facilities and available land, this is an achievable goal for the future.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 4.2
Existing Park Acreage Based On Classification System

City-Owned Parks:		66.5
Special Use Facilities (Community Center; MACSA Center)		7
Trails: (Off-street bicycle/pedestrian trails, such as along drainage corridors)	Paradise Park Trail	4.7
Recreational Open Space:		0
HOA Parks:	15.14@50%	7.6
Schools:		0
Total:		85.8

Table 4.3
Existing and future parkland deficit based on park acreage goals

Year	Population	Acreage Goal	Existing Acres	Deficit
2000	32,000	160	85.8	(74.2)
2020	46,600	233	85.8	(147.2)

Recommendation:

The City shall actively pursue acquisition of parkland to achieve park acreage goals. Where appropriate, pursue partnerships with other agencies and organizations (such as the Morgan Hill Unified School District, Santa Clara County Parks, and Santa Clara Valley Water District) to maximize recreational value of publicly owned but underused properties and to acquire new lands with the potential for joint use. The following chart identifies potential land acquisitions and opportunities for joint use of existing lands to achieve park acreage goals.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 4.4
Potential Future Park Acres:

Facility		Acres
City-owned Parks:	Soccer complex/sports parks	38-50
	New neighborhood parks	15-25
	Community Park expansion	6-14
	Subtotal City-owned Parks	59-89
Special Use Facilities:	Senior Center	0 ¹
	Aquatics Center	4-8
	Youth Center	0 ¹
	Theater	2-4
	Skate Park	0 ²
	BMX Park	0-2
	Subtotal Special Use Facilities¹	6-14
Trails:	Butterfield Linear Park	1.8
	Little Llagas Creek Trail	4.7
	Tennant/Corralitos Creek Trail	5.1
	Llagas Creek/Silveira Park Trail	1.2
	Tennant-School Trail	.9
	Subtotal Trails²	13.7
Recreational Open Space:	Silveira Park (57.92 acres @ 10%) ³	5.8-12.4
	Malaguerra Park (38 acres @ 10%)	
	San Pedro Percolation Ponds (28 acres @ 10%)	
HOA Parks:	0-10 @ 50% ⁴	0-5.0
Schools⁵		10-30
Total:		94.5-164.1

1 While all special use facilities are proposed to be built, some may be located at parkland that is either already owned or may be acquired by the City. These acres are accounted for elsewhere in the summary.

2 Trails are as noted in the *City of Morgan Hill Draft Bikeways Master Plan*.

3 Assumes joint use agreement between City and County for use of Silveira Park.

4 Assumes up to 10 additional acres of HOA parks as part of future development.

5 Assumes joint use of future school sites and possible joint use of some existing school sites.

Finding:

Not all neighborhoods are currently served by neighborhood or community parks within walking distance.

Recommendation:

Where feasible all residents should live within walking distance of a neighborhood or community park. This may not be feasible in hillside neighborhoods where topography does not support development of a neighborhood park. Some neighborhoods with HOA Parks may not desire an additional neighborhood park. This should be evaluated when determining where to target new neighborhood parks.

Acquisitions for new neighborhood parks should be focused in neighborhoods that are currently underserved by parks. Where feasible, coordinate with MHUSD to locate new neighborhood parks adjacent to new schools.

See the map on page 38 identifying the distribution of existing parks and other facilities in Morgan Hill.

Finding:

Community residents have expressed a concern of the impact that regional recreation facilities may have on neighborhoods. Residents have expressed a preference for recreation facilities that meet community needs first, and regional recreation needs as a secondary consideration if there is an operations and maintenance benefit.

Recommendation:

Community use should be the highest priority in the planning and design of new recreational facilities. The telephone survey supports regional tournament use of community facilities to help offset long-term maintenance costs, but facilities should not be built exclusively for regional tournament use. Facilities that may be used for regional tournaments should be located in a way to minimize impact on residential neighborhoods. These facilities should be located near the freeway and/or major arterial routes. The attached criteria should be used to evaluate potential locations for sports parks and other high-intensity use recreation facilities.

Finding:

The special use facilities identified in the Morgan Hill Vision process are strongly supported by the community. These include the proposed senior center, youth center, aquatics center, and permanent skate park.

Recommendation:

Continue to actively pursue locations for each of these facilities, recognizing that “synergies” occur between some of the facilities. Final location of each facility will be based on a number of factors, including acquisition and development costs, site availability, as well as other specific evaluation criteria for each facility. Program elements for each facility should be analyzed to maximize multi-generational facility use. For example, the youth center is proposed to be incorporated into an “indoor community recreation center” that would serve all age groups. Many senior activities will occur at different locations: senior exercise programs can occur at the indoor community recreation center; water therapy programs at the aquatics center and senior arts programs at the community cultural center. See the attached chart for design programs and potential sites for each facility.

Finding:

There is a shortage of fields for league play and informal pick-up games. School fields are used extensively for soccer, baseball, football and softball. Due to combined school and league use, fields are fully scheduled and cannot support demand. Overuse of fields leads to insufficient “down time” for regular maintenance, resulting in fields that are not maintained to a desired play level. Some leagues have had to reduce the number of games per season, and/or limit number of players due to insufficient number of fields. The potential closure of the CYSA soccer complex, and remodeling of Live Oak High School will exacerbate the shortage of fields available for local use.

Recommendation:

The City shall actively pursue acquisition of a sports park and/or soccer complex to partially meet existing and future recreational needs. In addition to centralized facilities, some fields at neighborhood parks are recommended. The City should consider an additional 10-16 baseball/softball fields, and 6-8 soccer fields, (not including replacement of the existing 13-field soccer complex.) This would allow for one school to be closed each year as part of a regular maintenance cycle, and provide additional fields for future growth. Some soccer fields should be designed as multi-use fields to accommodate football and grass volleyball.

Sports fields should be distributed with a cluster of fields (with lights) at a sports park, and individual fields (with no lights) at neighborhood parks. This will allow league and tournament play at a central location, while neighborhood-oriented practice and pick-up games can occur within walking/bicycling distance of homes. The sports park should include support facilities such as on-site parking, restrooms, concession stand, etc.

If the existing soccer complex cannot be acquired, a combination sports park/soccer complex could be built at another location. Criteria for selecting a sports park location are included in Appendix 6. Based on these criteria, the Malaguerra Park site is not recommended for a sports park.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Insert map

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding:

There is an insufficient number of tennis courts to meet current and future need. The existing tennis courts at Community Park are heavily used, although not in good condition. (Resurfacing and other improvements are scheduled for this fiscal year.) Many Morgan Hill tennis players travel to Gilroy for tennis due to inadequate courts in Morgan Hill. A minimum of 5 tennis courts is needed at one location to sponsor USTA tournaments.

Recommendation:

Expand the number of City-owned tennis courts by 4-8 courts, with a minimum of 5 at one location to allow for the sponsoring of USTA tennis tournaments. Community Park is a good location for this. Other courts can be distributed at neighborhood parks for neighborhood play.

Finding:

Volleyball is a growing sport within the community with limited facilities that do not meet current demand. There is current interest in indoor, grass and sand volleyball, but limited or no facilities for these activities. Indoor volleyball is currently played at school gyms, and grass volleyball is played on soccer fields. Scheduling conflicts with soccer fields restrict the use of these fields for volleyball. There are no public sand volleyball courts available in the City.

Recommendation:

Provide four sand volleyball courts to meet current and future needs. Proposed soccer fields should be multi-use so that they can also be used for volleyball. The proposed indoor gymnasium (as noted below) should be designed to accommodate indoor volleyball.

Finding:

A gymnasium is needed to meet indoor sports needs. Currently, school gyms are fully scheduled for school and recreational use. Demand, particularly for basketball and volleyball, exceeds available gym time.

Recommendation:

A gymnasium should be incorporated into the youth center program. The gymnasium component should be multi-use and “multi-generational” so that it can be scheduled for use by different age groups.

Finding:

A substantial amount of park acreage owned by the County and State is devoted to passive recreational use and scenic preservation in the vicinity of Morgan Hill.

Recommendation:

The City should focus its recreation resources on providing active recreational facilities, along with projects that preserve scenic resources and improve trail access within the community. Examples of this are trails and linear parks along creeks and drainage corridors and enhancements to Silveira Park.

Finding:

A system of walking and bicycling trails is desired by the community, especially along the City's creeks and drainage channels.

Recommendation:

Enhance partnerships with the Santa Clara Valley Water District to develop trails and linear parks along existing creeks and drainage channels. Recommended trails are included in the *Draft Bikeways Master Plan*. Also consider enhancing trails and access at Silveira Park which is owned by the County but located within City limits.

Finding:

Additional facility needs have been expressed by the community that were not included in the Vision Morgan Hill process. These include the need for a BMX (off-road) bicycle facility, and an off-leash dog park.

Recommendation:

Include a BMX bicycle facility and off-leash dog area in the long-term capital improvements goals of the Master Plan. Potential locations for these facilities are included in the PRC Preferred Scenario chart found in Chapter 5.

Capital Improvements Funding

Finding:

Park Development Impact Fees cannot be expected to fund all of the community's existing and future recreation needs. A variety of funding sources will be needed to achieve funding of all capital improvements.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation:

Actively pursue a variety of funding sources for capital improvements. Funding sources may include the following:

- Joint projects with other agencies and organizations
- Public and private grants
- Corporate sponsorships and private donations
- Redevelopment Agency financing
- Santa Clara County Open Space Authority
- Transient Occupancy Tax
- Transfer Tax (a tax on the transfer of property title)
- Parks and Recreation Charter Fund (see the operations and maintenance section)

Finding:

While the park development impact fee has been raised in recent years to reflect a cost of living index, it may not reflect current land values and park development costs.

Recommendation:

Park Development Impact Fees should be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect current land acquisition and park development costs. Revisions to the point system for residential development allocations should be coordinated with this review.

Facility Design

Finding:

A consistent process is needed for the design of recreation facilities that includes community involvement.

Recommendation:

A specific master plan shall be developed for each new City park and special use facility. The master plan shall include:

- a scaled plan graphic of the proposed park or facility at build-out
- a phasing plan if appropriate
- estimate of construction cost
- estimate of annual operations and maintenance costs
- estimate of revenue potential
- environmental review of the project as required by CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Insert bikeways map

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

For special use facilities and sports parks, in addition to the master plan, a business plan will be prepared identifying the following:

- proposed management structure
- anticipated market
- estimate of whether revenues will meet operations and maintenance costs
- source of additional operations and maintenance funds if needed
- opportunities for partnership with other agencies and organizations in facility development and operations.

Park and facility master planning shall include a public involvement process that is specifically tailored to each project. For example, neighborhood park master planning should focus on input from neighborhood residents, while community park and facility master planning should include broader community input. Input from specific schools and the school district shall be included for facilities built on or adjacent to schools. Youth and seniors should be encouraged to participate in the design process where appropriate.

Recreation Programming

Finding:

There are a number of organizations that currently provide diverse recreation activities for City residents. Due to severe City budget cutbacks in the early 1990's the City's recreation program was completely eliminated and only reinstated two years ago. Several other agencies and organizations (YMCA, MACSA, numerous sports leagues, etc.) have done an excellent job of providing recreation programs over the past several years. Based on analysis of available existing programs, there are gaps in availability of cultural arts programs. There is also a strong community desire for additional after-school, youth, senior and aquatics programs. Some programs appear to be too costly for residents with low income levels.

Recommendation:

The City should provide programs in-house, or partner with other recreation providers to provide programs in the following areas:

- visual and performing arts programs
- drop-in after school and summer parks programs
- youth-oriented field trips
- special events and City festivals
- a scholarship program to assist with fees and equipment costs programs at proposed facilities, such as the senior, youth and aquatics centers

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- programs for citizens with disabilities
- programs at proposed new facilities

Enhanced partnerships with existing and potential new recreation partners are strongly encouraged, but in each case the City must carefully evaluate whether it should provide the recreation programs, or partner with another agency to provide recreation programs. Decisions should be based on several criteria, including:

- cost or potential revenue to the City to operate in-house versus contracting with another agency
- ability to recruit qualified staff to run programs
- management and overhead implications
- ability to sustain programs over the long-term
- quality of service provided by the City versus other agencies
- compatibility of potential partner goals with City goals
- ability to reach target population

A request for proposal process should be used to solicit and evaluate potential recreation providers for those programs that may not be operated by the City.

Some facilities may have programs provided by multiple agencies. For example, an indoor recreation facility may have programs operated by the YMCA, sports leagues, and MACSA. While creative partnerships are encouraged, the City should maintain scheduling control of City-owned facilities. See the following for potential recreation partners at various facilities.

Table 4.5
Potential Recreation Facility Partners

Facility	Potential Recreation Partners	Comments
Community Recreation Center	YMCA, MACSA, Basketball and Volleyball leagues, Senior Advocacy Groups	City to manage facility scheduling. Joint operations and programming with other recreation providers. Recreation providers to contribute toward maintenance.
Aquatics Center	MHUSD, YMCA, Swim groups and teams	City to manage facility scheduling. Joint maintenance with MHUSD. Joint programming with other recreation providers.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 4.5
Potential Recreation Facility Partners (continued)

Soccer Complex/ Sports Park	Sports leagues, YMCA	City to manage facility scheduling. Leagues to contribute to maintenance. Joint programming by City, sports leagues, and YMCA.
New Neighborhood Parks	YMCA, Sports leagues	Incorporate practice sports fields into some neighborhood parks. Locate next to schools where feasible. Provide joint school/park restroom. City to manage scheduling of neighborhood park facilities. Provide after-school drop in programs at some neighborhood parks.

Finding:

While many recreation programs are available to community residents, there is a lack of awareness as to the breadth of available programs and who is sponsoring which program.

Recommendation

The City should serve as a “clearinghouse” for recreation programs provided by multiple agencies and organizations, and continue to expand and enhance partnerships in the provision of recreation programs.

Operations & Maintenance

Finding:

The City’s operations and maintenance costs will increase with expanded recreational facilities. While Redevelopment Agency and Park Impact Fee funds can be used for facility development, they cannot be used for long-term operations and maintenance.

Recommendation:

Actively pursue a variety of funding sources for long-term operations and maintenance. These funding sources may include the following:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- User fees for recreational programs and use of City facilities. Consider a “sliding scale” based on income for some user fees, and/or scholarships for program costs and equipment for lower income residents.
- Tournament rental of some facilities.
- Continue to encourage businesses and corporations to contribute toward parks maintenance through an “adopt-a-park” program (similar to the State’s “adopt-a-highway” program). This may not be a reliable, consistent, long-term funding source.
- Consider establishing a non-profit “Friends of Morgan Hill Recreation” foundation to elicit private funding support for parks and recreation programs and maintenance.
- Consider allocating a portion of the transient occupancy (hotel) tax to fund parks maintenance.
- Consider establishing a “Parks Charter Fund” similar to Santa Clara County Parks. A charter fund is a designated, fixed allocation of the General Fund for parks and recreation purposes. The allocation is set by a citywide vote, and cannot be changed without a similar vote. This allows the parks department to plan ahead for capital improvements and long-term maintenance knowing that a fixed, reliable base revenue source will be available. This concept does not require additional taxes or assessments.
- Continue to establish an “endowment fund” for parks maintenance using the interest from funds collected when developers voluntarily double or triple the base park impact fee as a part of the residential allocation process.
- Consider establishing a citywide assessment for landscape maintenance. Currently there are 20 individual “landscape and lighting ” sub-areas within a maintenance district that pay an assessment for maintenance of parks and other public spaces within each district. Costs per household range from about \$9 to nearly \$500. A citywide system would allow for a more even distribution of fees, possible conversion of some Homeowners Association Parks to City parks, and a regular funding source for operations and maintenance. Establishment of a citywide assessment is more difficult since passage of Proposition 218. A 2/3 vote of all voters would be required to establish the assessment.

As noted in the Facility Design recommendations, master planning of new facilities should include an evaluation of long-term operations and maintenance costs and identification of funding sources, *prior* to project development.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding:

Due to lack of funding, some parks have not been maintained to a desirable level. Recent funding increases and new maintenance positions have improved the ability of the City to maintain its parks, but there are several deferred maintenance items that will need attention to bring all parks up to desired standards. Examples include out-dated irrigation systems, along with fields and planting areas in need of renovation.

Recommendation:

Establish a measurable set of standards for park maintenance, baseline standard achievement goals, annual review of whether the baseline standard has been achieved, and annual action plan of how to incrementally improve the baseline standard. Standards may include expected performance of irrigation systems, turf health and appearance, infield quality, safety of play equipment, response time for vandalism and graffiti repair, condition of site furnishings, lighting function, etc.

In some instances, it may be more cost-effective to contract operations and maintenance tasks rather than providing them in-house. This approach reduces full-time staffing requirements, administrative overhead, and purchase of equipment. Similar to the decision of whether to contract recreation programming services, an objective set of criteria should be established and reviewed to determine which maintenance tasks should be provided in-house and which should be contracted. (Contracting of maintenance services may have some implications for current union contract requirements.)

Finding:

Mini-parks are more costly to maintain per acre than larger parks, and due to their limited size, provide limited recreational value.

Recommendation:

Mini-Parks should be discouraged in the future, unless they serve a specific function, such as a downtown plaza.

Finding:

While public restrooms are desired by the community at public parks, they are difficult and costly to maintain to an acceptable standard.

Recommendation:

Establish guidelines for which types of parks will have restrooms.

All community parks, sports parks and special use facilities shall have public restrooms.

Neighborhood parks may have restrooms if dictated by programming needs, such as parks designated for after-school drop-in programs, and parks with sports fields for practice and pick-up games.

Wherever feasible use pre-fabricated restrooms that are designed specifically for vandal resistance and to minimize maintenance. Consider a trial of using portable restrooms at some parks with regular contract cleaning. Where new parks are located next to schools, incorporate into the design a restroom that can serve both the park and the school.

Homeowners Association Parks

Finding:

Since the passage of Proposition 218 and with limited parks maintenance funds, the City has relied on Homeowners Association (HOA) Parks to serve neighborhood recreational needs. The advantage of HOA Parks is that they provide neighborhood recreational facilities without the City incurring long-term maintenance. This has been especially significant since the passage of Proposition 218, which has made it more difficult for the City to establish maintenance districts to fund parks maintenance. The disadvantage is that the City has no control over long-term management and use of these facilities. Many HOA Parks have been fenced off for homeowner association use only, due to concerns of vandalism and liability. As a result, some HOA parks, while valued by the association members, do not contribute to a larger sense of community.

Recommendation:

A series of guidelines are recommended for design of HOA parks to maximize their recreational value. These guidelines are noted below.

HOA Parks should include as a minimum the following features:

- Minimum park size of 1.5 acres (park acreage should be proportional to development size and projected population)*.
- **Usable** turf area with minimum continuous size of 100 x 200 feet*.
- Tot play area with a minimum 40' diameter and three play features.
- At least one other active recreational feature, such as basketball court (minimum high school size half-court), volleyball, tennis, or handball court, or exercise course.
- Seating (benches and/ or picnic tables)
- Drinking fountain
- Bicycle parking
- Park must be developed to City standards and in compliance with ADA/CPSC guidelines.
- Shade trees

* Smaller sizes could be considered for smaller developments provided that spaces are still functional.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

At the same time, the City should actively pursue creative funding alternatives for parks maintenance and opportunities for partnerships with homeowners associations to encourage more access to HOA parks. As an example, the City should explore the possibility of assuming liability for HOA parks if the HOA agrees to maintain the park to an established standard and allow public access. (This would not apply to swimming pool or clubhouse areas that should be exclusively for HOA members, or HOA parks inside gated communities.)